



News Release

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FLU SEASON IS JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 'High risk' population to get vaccines starting in October

OLYMPIA ³/₄ Timing is everything when it comes to getting your flu vaccination this influenza season. It is important for high-risk populations to be vaccinated beginning in October, and for the general population to wait until November. Many people think they should be vaccinated in August or September to keep from getting the flu, but influenza season in the United States generally runs between January and March. Washington's flu season usually peaks in February. Your health care provider can tell you if you're a high-risk patient who should be on the priority list to get vaccinated starting in October.

Some people are much harder hit by influenza than others. Everyone with chronic medical conditions including diabetes, asthma or other lung conditions, heart disease, kidney disease, and those who are HIV-positive, are considered high risk and need flu vaccination first. Senior citizens over 65, long-term care residents, health care workers, and pregnant women in their second or third trimester are also considered a priority to be vaccinated early.

Flu infection causes fever, headache, muscle aches, weakness, sore throat and cough. For people in high-risk categories, influenza can often lead to severe illness such as pneumonia. In fact, people in these groups also are encouraged to get a pneumococcal vaccination if they have never had one.

A common misconception about the flu is that it involves nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea. "Influenza is a respiratory infection," said Cindy Gleason, health educator for the Immunization Program. "If you have these other symptoms, it is probably an intestinal virus or food poisoning, not the flu."

"We expect to have enough flu vaccine to meet our program needs," said Gleason, "However, delivery of the vaccine from suppliers is expected to be later than it has been in the past. Washington state is

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recommending to health care providers that flu shots be given first to high-risk groups. There will be plenty of time for others to get their flu shots before flu season.”

Catching the flu can be miserable and may result in lost days from work or school, Gleason said. But, it can also lead to pneumonia, hospitalization, and even death. An annual flu shot is the best way for anyone — young, old, healthy, not so healthy — to protect against the serious health effects of influenza.

Another common misconception is that flu vaccine causes the flu. “That’s simply not the case,” Gleason said. “If someone gets sick after getting a flu shot, they probably caught a cold or flu virus before they got the shot. It takes about two weeks for the flu shot to start protecting you against the three strains of flu included in this years vaccine.”

For more information about flu vaccine availability in your community, contact your local health office:

Local Health Jurisdiction	Immunization Contact	
Adams County Health District	Ginger Becker	(509) 488-2031
Asotin County Health District	Diane Russo	(509) 758-3344
Benton-Franklin Health District	Rae Scott	(509) 943-2614
Bremerton-Kitsap County Health District	Janet Kauzlarich	(360) 337-5235
Chelan-Douglas Health District	Mary Small	(509) 886-6400
Clallam County Dept. of Health & Human Services	Ann Johnson	(360) 417-2274
Columbia County Health District	Lynna Larsen	(509) 382-2181
Cowlitz County Health Department	Les Monroe	(360) 414-5599
Garfield County Health District	Jackie Tetrick	(509) 843-3412
Grant County Health District	Marjie Hancock	(509) 754-6060
Grays Harbor County Health Department	Kimberly Carson	(360) 532-8665
Island County Health Department	Shannon McDonnell	(360) 679-7350
Jefferson County Health and Human Services	Lisa McKenzie	(360) 385-9400
Kittitas County Health Department	Stephanie McCrone	(509) 962-7515
Klickitat County Health Department	Theresa Rundell	(509) 773-4565
Lewis County Public Health	Jane Sheldon	(360) 740-1223
Lincoln County Public Health Coalition	Jolene Erickson	(509) 725-1001
Mason County Department of	Joy Johnson	(360) 427-9670
NE Tri-County Health District	Paulette Salo	(509) 684-1301
Okanogan County Health District	Lori Albert	(509) 422-7140

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Pacific County Health Department	Leah Heintz	(360) 875-9343
Public Health – Seattle/King County	James Apa	(206) 205-5442
San Juan County Health Department	JoAnne Campbell	(360) 378-4474
Skagit County Department of Health	Amie Tidrington	(360) 336-9380
Snohomish Health District	Margaret Austin	(425) 339-5210
Spokane Regional Health District	Cindy Jobb	(509) 324-1500
SW Washington Health District	Robin Kratz	(360) 397-8215
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Cindy Miron	(253) 798-6500
Thurston County Public Health Department	Marianne Remy	(360) 786-5581
Wahkiakum Health Department	Joell Archibald	(360) 795-6207
Walla Walla County Health Department	Jill Stiffler	(509) 527-3290
Whatcom County Health District	Carole Allen	(360) 676-6720
Whitman County Health Department	Shannon Hatley	(509) 397-6280
Yakima County Health District	Darlene Agnew	(509) 575-4040

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